

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore voted to support minority, women and veteran-owned small businesses today as the Small Business Contracting Program Improvements Act passed the House of Representatives, 334 to 80. The bill updates, in part, Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, to help meet the business development needs of minority small businesses.

Ensuring minority businesses have a fair opportunity to compete for federal contracts is a top priority for Congresswoman Moore. In the spring, Rep. Moore introduced legislation to update the Section 8(a) program.

“It has been too long since the 8(a) program to help minority entrepreneurs access federal contracts was updated – this bill would update the program and provide key help to minority and veteran businesses,” Congresswoman Gwen Moore said. “We must make more of an effort to encourage minority, women and veteran entrepreneurship. This bill would ensure that these businesses can compete fairly in the federal marketplace, grow their enterprises and create new jobs.”

The bill, much like legislation Congresswoman Moore introduced this spring, strengthens federal contracting programs for minority-owned firms. This bill will modernize the 8(a) program to reflect the changing economy. Like Moore’s legislation, businesses will now have the opportunity to participate in the program for 10 years. This 1-year program extension will provide businesses more time to successfully grow and graduate out of the program. Additionally, like Moore’s proposal, this bill will raise the net worth restriction of the small business owner so that successful minority businesses are not shut out of the program.

Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act has not been updated since 1988 – over 20 years ago. Yet, according to the Small Business Administration’s Office of Advocacy, minorities owned 18 percent of U.S. firms in 2002, up from 7 percent in 1982. Black-owned firms increased by 45 percent in just five years from 1997 to 2002; Hispanic-owned firms increased 31 percent.

“Minority-owned businesses are on the rise and it only makes sense to strengthen this last remaining federal initiative focusing on the development of minority-owned businesses through the award of federal contracts,” Moore said.

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